

## Undergraduate Community-Based Learning Abroad: Maximizing Impact

Lisa Folda<sup>1</sup>, MHS; Daniela Lewy<sup>2</sup>, MPH; Eric Rice<sup>3</sup>, PhD

1. JHU Zanvyl Krieger School of Arts and Sciences, Undergraduate Program in Public Health Studies, 2. Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health, Department of International Health, 3.JHU School of Education

In the 2011-2012 academic year, Johns Hopkins University (JHU) offered two new undergraduate programs abroad that emphasized service-learning and community engagement: a public health program centered on the HIV/AIDS epidemic in South Africa, and a program in Uganda that examined rural and urban child health and education challenges and interventions.

Components of each model were adapted from successful established programs including, but not limited to Global Roots, School for International Training, Vermont Intercultural Semesters, and CIEE.

*My favorite aspect of the trip was being and working with the Makerere students...on most trips you do not have the opportunity to spend so much time with people at the same point in their lives... – JHU Student*

### Childhood Health and Society in Uganda

21 students: 14 American (JHU) and 7 Ugandan (Makerere)  
3 Instructors: 2 American and 1 Ugandan  
3.5 weeks long  
Urban and rural child health and education



### Public Health in South Africa

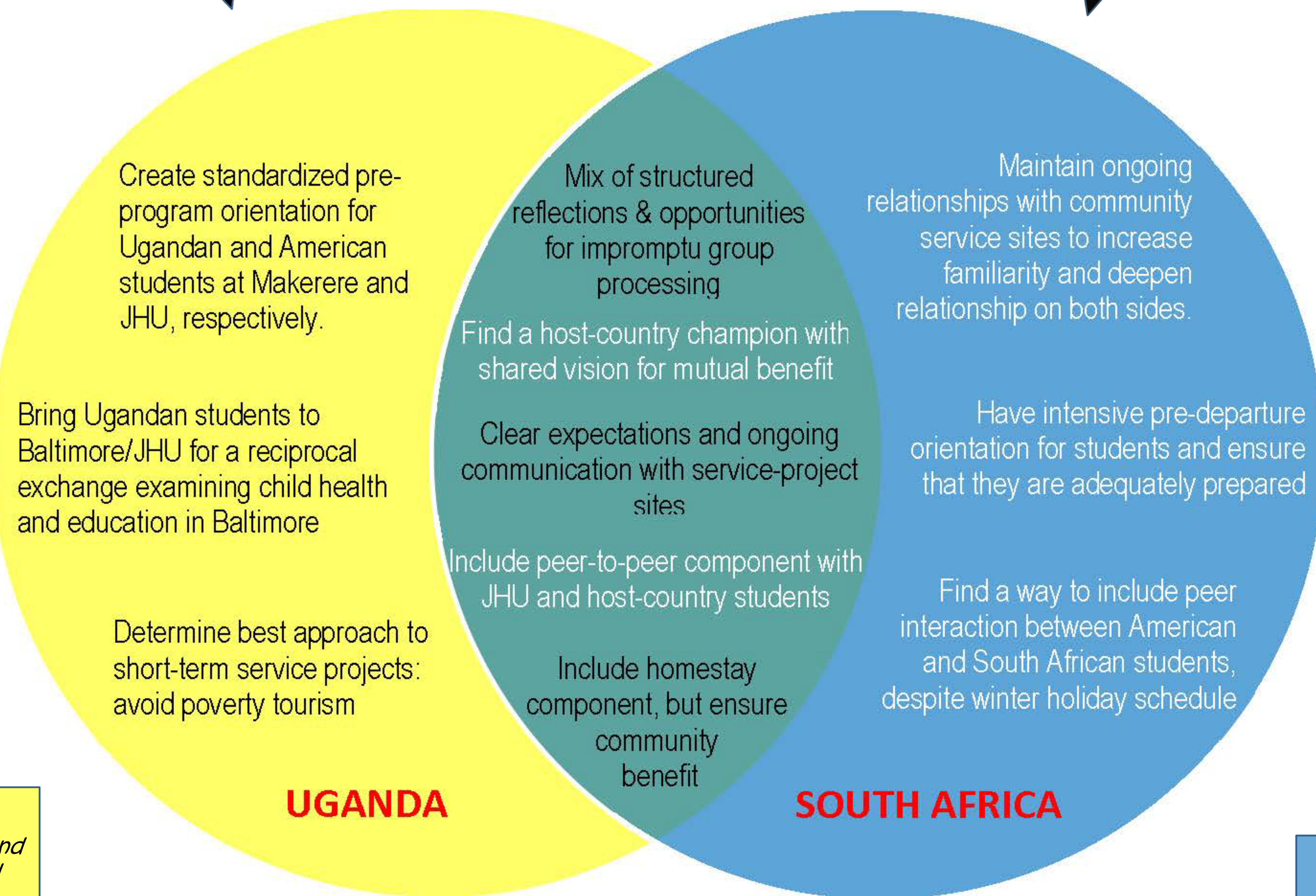
10 students: 10 American (JHU)  
3 Instructors: 1 American, 1 Canadian, 1 South African  
7 weeks long  
South African public health through the lens of HIV

*The students have been enthusiastic, diligent and willing to work ... They have been a great pleasure to have on board and a very useful resource ... I think it is particularly good that the interns have 3 days "on site" and other time at UCT. I think this contributes to a better and more rounded overall experience. – Community Site Supervisor*

Program Element	Successes	Challenges
Student preparation ahead of time	Experiential initiatives to challenge preconceived ideas. Highlighted social, political and cultural context of Uganda for American students Prepared students for peer-to-peer model Skyped with Ugandan students.	Ugandan students' pre-program orientation was not as in-depth
Peer-to peer	Learned together, lived together. All students cited it as critical to their learning.	Learning felt more designed for the Americans, with Ugandans sometimes playing role as translator/guide
Co-planning: JHU/Makerere	Shared vision Working together from the start	Misunderstandings regarding long-term partnership objectives
Reflection	Student and instructor lead. Deepened personal growth. Living together for entire 3.5 weeks facilitated reflection as needed.	Each session was ambitious in tried to combine academic and experiential/personal reflections
Service projects	Sites enthusiastic about volunteers and participants enthusiastic about volunteering	Too brief, relationship felt transactional – poverty tourism?
Rural homestay	Sited as the most important component for Ugandan and American students. Fostered genuine cultural exchange. Families were surveyed and positively reviewed experience.	While families reported positively in evaluations, what do the families receive from hosting?

Program Priorities

Program Priorities



Challenges	Successes	Program Element
Gauging sufficient preparation in Baltimore pre-departure vs. more intensive orientation once arrived.	Challenging preconceived ideas. Meeting fellow students and site supervisors before placements begin. Highlighting social, political, and cultural context of South Africa.	Student preparation ahead of time
Challenging to make good matches between organizational needs and student abilities – student pool is a limiting factor.	Extended time in a 'real' work experience with the chance to develop relationships over time.	Internships 3 days/week with South African NGO.
For new groups, at times difficult to know what a would be a realistic assignment for the student capacity and/or program time.	Sites articulated a specific assignment/need, buy-in from several levels of the organization.	Co-planning for internships with NGOs
UCT students on winter holiday – more peer interaction has the potential to be good for both institutions.	Good buy-in, benefits to both campuses and room for further collaboration.	Co-Planning: JHU/University of Cape Town
Weekly group conversations sometimes too sparse.	Good variety of voices/means of expression.	Weekly individual written and weekly group oral reflections
Brief.	Great to experience life in a township, not just work.	3 night homestay

*My host mother deeply impacted my life and forever will hold a place in my heart...I have learned so much about work ethic, generosity and having an open mind/heart. – JHU Student*

*Following the program, the host families reported feeling a strong bond with the students that they believed would be enduring; there was an expectation that promises made by the students during the stay would be fulfilled; and the desire to host future students. - MakerereHomestay survey*

*It was fast paced, but I felt we could adequately reflect on everything that was important to us. – JHU Student*

*The task put to the [JHU students] was extensive and challenging but I think [they] had a real positive impact...however, as I am reading the reports ... I am as unsure about the [objective] as I was before. [It]is a serious responsibility to write a recommendation upon which the path of a young life might be decided. Possibly a too big responsibility. Unfortunately the overall aim therefore was not achieved. - Community Site Supervisor*

The literature on mutuality and reciprocity is large and growing. In reviewing our programs and considering lessons learned, additional review of the literature has proven invaluable. Influential writing includes, but is not limited to:

- Crabtree, R. (2011). "Review Essay: Progress and Promise for International Service-Learning." *Michigan Journal of Community Service Learning*. 17(2): 78-82.
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- Keith, NZ. (2005). "Community Service Learning in the Face of Globalization: Rethinking Theory and Practice." *Michigan Journal of Service Learning*, Spring 2005:5-24.
- Landau, J, & DC Moore. (2001). "Towards Reconciliation in the Motherland: Race, Class, Nationality, Gender, and the Complexities of American Student Presence at the University of Ghana, Legon." *Frontiers: The Interdisciplinary Journal of Study Abroad*. 7(2): 25-59.
- Lutterman-Aguilar, A, & O Gingerich. (2002). "Experiential Pedagogy for Study Abroad." *Frontiers: The Interdisciplinary Journal of Study Abroad*. 8(7): 41-82.
- Marullo, S., et al. (2009). "C. Wright Mills's Friendly Critique of Service Learning and an Innovative Response: Cross- Institutional Collaborations for Community-Based Research." *Teaching Sociology*, Vol. 37, 2009 (January:61-75).
- Oldfield, S. (2008). "Who's Serving Whom?: Partners, Process, and Projects in Service-Learning Projects in South African Urban Geography." *Journal of Geography in Higher Education*. 32(2): 269-285.
- Reilly, D, & S. Sanders. (2009). "Becoming the Change We Want to See: Critical Study Abroad for a Tumultuous World." *Frontiers: The Interdisciplinary Journal of Study Abroad*. 18 (Fall 2009): 241-267.

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